

Equity, diversity and inclusion: Our action plan

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Introduction

To achieve our purpose we need to embed equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into everything we do. Understanding and highlighting the inequalities, disadvantages, discrimination, and vulnerabilities that people face, how they intersect, and what should be done about them will remain a major part of our work. We want to develop an inclusive organisational culture, welcoming new perspectives and valuing different experiences.

Our focus is on groups defined according to legally protected characteristics, as well as others such as socioeconomic background, neurodiversity, migration status, and care experience.

We recognise that our organisation is part of a wider system that needs to be more representative of UK society, and more inclusive in how research is funded and designed. We will work with others to build our understanding, make improvements, and play our part in addressing structural inequalities in our sector. There is more to do, and we are committed to pursuing meaningful, lasting change.

After engaging our staff, we have set out three areas of focus in our action plan. We will:

01

Ensure that understanding and addressing inequalities, disadvantage, and discrimination remains central to the work we fund and do. We will embed equity, diversity and inclusion in our work, including in the ways we consider our five priority questions. We will ensure a diverse range of people and perspectives can actively participate in our discussions, meetings, and events.

02

Increase the diversity of those we fund and work with. We will continue to monitor the diversity of our grant-holders and will actively engage with under-represented groups. We will diversify our partners and provide inclusive and accessible support for early-career researchers we fund.

03

Employ staff from diverse backgrounds and ensure an inclusive workplace culture, which respects and celebrates differences, with policies and practices that support the well-being of all our staff. Our leadership team will be accountable for embedding this approach, and our governance arrangements will support it.

We will work in an evidence-led way, using internal and external data and insights to monitor our progress and inform priorities, and be ready to experiment and learn.

This paper outlines our actions under each of those aims. We recognise they will take time to fully achieve, and many of the actions for the first year represent only a step on a longer journey. However, this plan also sets out changes that we can make relatively quickly. An updated Action Plan will be published annually.

Where we are

- The Foundation has a long history of supporting work that seeks to understand and address inequalities, disadvantage, discrimination, and vulnerabilities, and continues to do so. For example:
 - Recent funded research has focused on topics including ethnic inequalities in later life, race and religion among care-experienced children, experiences of ethnic minority children in education, digital citizenship of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller young people, children with special educational needs and disabilities, the disability employment gap, gender and work, experiences of LGBTQ+ people in accessing benefits, and disadvantaged young people's employment in professional occupations.
 - One of our largest and most ambitious grants is the IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities, a comprehensive study of how inequalities arise, which ones matter, why they matter, and how they should be addressed.
 - We launched the Racial Diversity UK (RDUK) programme in 2024 to fund research into the barriers and pathways to a racially just and inclusive society.
- We commissioned external focus-group research to gather preliminary insights into how to make our grants-making processes equitable and inclusive for Black researchers.
- The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory published unique analysis and data on the ethnicity of children and parents in the family justice system, and learning disability and difficulties among parents in care proceedings. It established the Racial Justice Family Network, dedicated to improving outcomes for ethnically minoritised children, families, and professionals.
- The Ada Lovelace Institute engages with different publics through participatory methods to centre diversity of lived experiences, and consciously works to create space for diverse voices, particularly those from marginalised communities, through platforms such as the Ada Blog.
- EDI is a key consideration in the approach and recommendations of Nuffield Council on Bioethics projects, including assisted dying, climate change, and disagreements in the care of critically ill children, and this will continue in future work.
- In 2023, we launched the Nuffield Foundation Emerging Researchers Network to nurture early career research talent. The aim is to build a more diverse and inclusive research sector for the future.
- We carry out diversity and inclusion monitoring of our staff, as well as applicants, grant-holders, and their teams, to better understand who applies for and receives our funding. We publish the findings in our annual report.
- Our inclusive recruitment processes include anonymising applications and using bias-reduction tools in decision-making. We are accredited with the [RNIB's Visibly Better standard](#), signed up to the [Age-Friendly Employer pledge](#), and are a [Level 2 Disability Confident employer](#).
- We host placements through the 10,000 Interns Foundation, which provides paid internships for Black and disabled students and graduates.

Aim 1: Embedding and championing EDI in the substance of our work

Implement a shared responsibility for embedding EDI across our work

Directors and their teams and departments do not currently set objectives by default for how they will embed EDI into their work.

ACTION All Directors to set objectives for their teams that will embed EDI in their work.

RESULT These objectives will be relevant and specific for each team and will help promote the shared responsibility of being more equitable and inclusive across the different functions of the Foundation and Centres. They will also support staff in talking confidently internally and externally about how EDI is embedded in our work. Each objective will have specific measures enabling Directors and their teams to monitor progress.

Aim 1: Actions

Review our portfolio, reflect on learnings, and identify gaps

Addressing inequality, disadvantage, and discrimination is central to the work we fund and do. However, we have previously only informally monitored which EDI-relevant topics and methodologies we cover well, and where gaps exist. We want to more systematically highlight and develop areas that are working well and explore where we can address gaps.

ACTION We will map how our funding addresses inequalities, disadvantage, and discrimination, including intersections between them, in the work that we fund through our grants. We will review the applications submitted to the RDUK fund to identify themes that we didn't take forward to full application, and where these intersect with the Foundation's five priority questions. Regular seminars for staff will raise awareness of the latest research and thinking on EDI topics, encouraging reflection and discussion on how these issues can be considered in our work.

RESULT Following the mapping review and the RDUK application review, we will identify where the priority gaps are and put plans in place to address them. We will deliver four to six EDI seminars in 2025 on racial disparities.

Develop and implement inclusive events policy and guidance

We aim to make the events we host as inclusive as possible, through agenda and format design, proactively anticipating accessibility needs, and making adjustments requested by attendees. We do not yet have a consistent organisation-wide policy on event inclusion, speaker and panel selection criteria, speaker invitation acceptance criteria, and how to use our influence to encourage inclusion and accessibility.

ACTION We will develop a new policy on how to improve inclusivity and representation at our own events. This will be co-created with our staff and informed by publicly available guidance. We will also consider the diversity policies of organisers when we are invited to present, speak, or take part in panel discussions at events hosted by others.

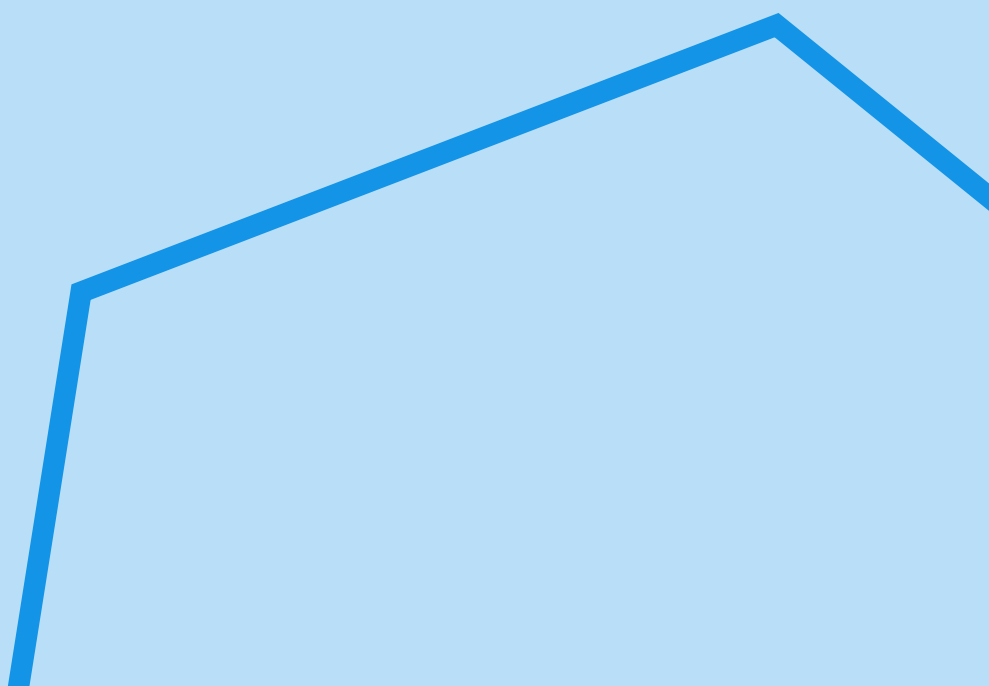
RESULT We will have an events policy that is used across the Foundation and its Centres. We will collect data and feedback to evaluate its effectiveness, and will explore external certification on running inclusive events.

Engage with a wider range of stakeholders

Across the Foundation and Centres, we hold relationships with a wide network of stakeholders. Although we are aware of the need to diversify these networks and seek to do so, we do not yet have a consistent, systematic approach. We want to collaborate more intentionally with a broader range of people and perspectives.

ACTION We will develop and pilot a consistent stakeholder mapping approach to support us in including a range of different people and diverse perspectives in our work.

RESULT Our approach will be developed and piloted in 2025, with the aim of rolling it out across the Foundation and Centres in 2026.



Aim 2: Funding a more diverse range of partners and grant-holders

Continue collecting and quality assuring data of applicants and grant-holders

Between 2022 and 2024, 65% of our applicants for research funding were women, 17% were from an ethnic minoritised background (8% Asian/Asian British, 4% Mixed, 3% Other, and 2% Black/Black British), and 17% had a disability.

Over the same period, funding success rates were 10% for men and 7% for women. By ethnicity, success rates were 14% for applicants from Other ethnic groups, 8% for White applicants, 6% for Asian/Asian British, 2% for Mixed, and 0% for Black/Black British. Success rates were 8% for applicants without a disability and 6% for those with a disability.

As of January 2025, 59% of our lead grant-holders are women, 11% are from an ethnic minoritised background (5% Asian/Asian British, 4% Other, 2% Mixed, and 0% Black/Black British), and 16% have a disability.

ACTION We will continue to collect and analyse data on our applicants and grant-holders with a view to better understanding differences in application rates and success rates across different groups, and will also conduct proportionate quality control of that data.

RESULT It may take time to see clear changes in our data, but we will track the relevant trends and benchmark them as appropriate, and use the insights to inform our future actions and priorities.

Conduct a review of the grants-making process

Although fairness, equity, and transparency are considered when we amend our grant application processes, we have not previously undertaken a systematic exercise to ensure those processes are equitable and inclusive.

ACTION We will conduct a review of our grants-making process to identify and minimise actual, potential, and perceived bias. The scope is likely to include our assessment criteria, application guidance, decision-making processes and structures, use of peer reviews, and how we communicate with applicants. While this review is underway, as a short-term action, we will implement a framework to identify and mitigate potential biases in our funding decisions.

RESULT The framework will be in place for our autumn 2025 funding round. The review will begin by the end of 2025, and we will publish the findings and details of any resulting changes we intend to make.

Continue to explore how to build relationships with the Black researcher community

Focus group research in 2023 highlighted the need for us to build more and deeper relationships with the Black researcher community. Training has been delivered to a small group of Foundation staff to begin this process.

ACTION Through facilitated conversations with a group of Black researchers, we will listen to and consider their perspectives and further explore how to identify and develop professional relationships with the Black researcher community.

RESULT We will have a better understanding of barriers faced by Black researchers applying to the Foundation, and feed insights into the development of the plan for our grants review.

Establish our approach to building equity and inclusion in the research sector

Some of our actions that could support EDI in the wider research sector are ad hoc, with no underpinning strategy.

ACTION We will strengthen our commitment to tackling inequalities and building equity and inclusion in the sector. We will also explore appropriate ways to collaborate with other research funders to maximise the value of our contributions.

RESULT We will have developed and communicated our approach to building EDI in the research sector and include this in our 2026 EDI Action Plan. We will have formed or joined networks to advance EDI in our areas of influence.

Online event for applicants from under-represented groups

Our outreach to potential applicants has not explicitly focused on engaging under-represented groups.

ACTION We will pilot an event to engage first-time applicants - particularly those from under-represented groups - to support a better understanding of our grant application process.

RESULT Following the completion of our grants process review, we will identify additional support for under-represented groups and set out our actions in future EDI Action Plan updates.

Further support for minoritised early career researchers

We run an Emerging Researchers Network of early career researchers whom we fund, but our activities have not focused on minoritised or disadvantaged groups.

ACTION We will scope out what support or opportunities we should offer Black researchers and/or researchers from minoritised or disadvantaged groups.

RESULT We will be able to clearly demonstrate how our support to the researcher pipeline is helping create a more diverse and inclusive sector.

Aim 3: Diversifying our workforce and embedding an inclusive culture

Developing our leaders

Our last leadership development programme was in 2023, but it did not focus specifically on inclusion. While EDI training has been provided to all staff, there has not been specific training for the leadership team and senior management. Feedback from staff engagement and staff inclusion surveys shows that senior leaders need to be more visible and lead by example on EDI.

ACTION We will develop and deliver an Inclusive Leadership programme, and we will review the role of Trustees and other members of our governance structures in supporting an inclusive culture.

RESULT We will measure the impact of this work through staff surveys and the 360 feedback process.

Inclusive recruitment

Significant efforts have been made to develop our recruitment processes over the last few years, and we now have comprehensive data on candidates and how they progress through the recruitment stages. The data suggests that whilst we are attracting a higher proportion of diverse candidates, those success rates decline as the process progresses for candidates from racialised minorities or with disabilities.

ACTION We will provide hiring managers with inclusive recruitment support and develop a set of EDI and values-based questions for interviews. We will also pilot different approaches to hiring and enhance the guidance provided to prospective candidates.

RESULT Impact will be measured through changes in recruitment success rates for minority groups, candidate feedback (collected via our recruitment platform), and shifts in data such as workforce composition and pay gaps. Staff surveys will help us understand if perceptions of diversity in the workplace improve.

Embedding an inclusive culture

We have held different forms of EDI training over the past few years, and continue to host talks and sessions with speakers and organisations exploring how a range of topics and issues relate to our workplace and the work that we fund and do. However, staff survey results indicate that there is still more we can do to create and embed a truly inclusive culture and demonstrate our commitment to EDI.

ACTION We have refreshed our organisational values and will support their integration through new ways of working and inclusive leadership behaviours. We will review staff policies to ensure they are aligned with our values, EDI ambitions, and wider best practice. We will also continue to further knowledge and awareness of diversity in the workplace through training, and by using internal events to highlight religious and cultural events.

RESULT Our leadership team will have EDI-related objectives, and there will be a shared understanding of how our values (and supporting ways of working) apply to our work. We hope these initiatives will lead to a higher proportion of staff agreeing that we are a more inclusive organisation.